



24-5575

**DATE:** May 7, 2024 (Item No. {{item.number}})  
**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Rocio G. Luna, Deputy County Executive  
Sera Fernando, Office of LGBTQ Affairs Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Sponsorship of Queer Afro Latin Dance Festival 2024

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Approve County sponsorship of the Queer Cultural Center (QCC-The Center for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Art and Culture) in the amount of \$5,000 from the Office of LGBTQ Affairs, Office of the County Executive, Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget to support the sixth annual Queer Afro Latin Dance Festival. (LA-1)

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

There would be no adverse impact to the General Fund. There are sufficient funds in the Office of LGBTQ Affairs (OLGBTQA), Office of the County Executive, Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Adopted Budget to cover the total sponsorship amount of \$5,000.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND**

The Queer Afro Latin Dance Festival (Festival) is the only event of its kind in the United States. Hosted by In Lak'ech Dance Academy, the 2024 Festival will be held in San José on June 14 to June 17, featuring 60 dance workshops representing 10 diverse genres, multiple dancing sessions, and four nights of showcase performances from queer, transgender, and ally world-renowned dancers. This year's in-person Festival will also include the third annual Queer Afro Latin Dance Competition as well as a discussion panel based on the Festival's theme of "Navigating Consent and Safety in Afro Latin Dance," centered around growth, unity, safety, and consent. The anticipated number of participants across programming for the 2024 Festival is approximately 1,500 over the four days.

In Lak'ech Dance Academy was founded in 2017 by Jahaira Fajardo and Angelica Medina—two dancers with a passion to create a safe and affirming space for all who desire to dance—and is the only queer, transgender, and ally salsa and bachata dance academy in the nation. Their mission is to foster a community of queer, transgender, and ally dancers to celebrate resilience, nurture collective strength, and help heal from oppression. Through its everyday work and annual Festival, In Lak'ech Dance Academy is redefining the Afro Latin dance community as a safe and affirming space for all gender identities and sexualities.

The fiscal intermediary for In Lak'ech Dance Academy is the Queer Cultural Center (QCC-The Center for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Art and Culture), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

The County's sponsorship of the 2024 Festival would include the following impacts:

- Demonstrate the County's ongoing commitment to supporting LGBTQ+ communities through the creation of safe and celebratory spaces;
- Ensure the visibility of LGBTQ+ Santa Clara County residents, particularly those who are also Black, indigenous, or other people of color; and
- Provide valuable opportunities for connection to LGBTQ+ community members, which is especially important since social isolation within this community was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The County would also receive access to the following brand visibility opportunities: logo inclusion on the Festival's website and social media platforms, media recognition at main stage activities, and tabling during the event to provide resource materials and information to attendees and share more about the County's work. Additionally, the County would receive four full passes and event swag that can be given to Santa Clara County residents.

### *Background*

According to a 2013 health assessment conducted by the Public Health Department, LGBTQ+-identified persons experience more instances of discrimination, social isolation, and stigmatization than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. LGBTQ+ persons may also face unique barriers when attempting to access healthcare services, secure housing, and/or maintain employment, ranging from experiences of interpersonal discrimination to physical violence. OLGBTQA, part of the Division of Equity and Social Justice in the Office of the County Executive, supports and contributes to programming to combat these negative health disparities.

The Festival aims to provide a safe, inclusive, and affirming space, especially for queer, transgender, and ally Afro Latin dancers. In response to community demand, In Lak'ech Dance Academy created the Festival in 2018. In its inaugural year, there were over 400 attendees and 50 performances, and 16 instructors provided over 24 hours of dance instruction. In its second year, the number of attendees nearly doubled to more than 700, and the number of instructors increased to 25.

In 2021, the Festival was held virtually due to the pandemic, yet drew more than 300 attendees from all over the world. Also, the Festival was renamed to the "Queer Afro Latin Dance Festival" to acknowledge and honor the role of African culture within the roots of Latin dance. On May 25, 2021 (Item No. 64), the Board approved a sponsorship for the event in the amount of \$1,000 on behalf OLGBTQA.

In 2022 and 2023, the Festival returned to an in-person format with an estimated 1,000 community members in attendance annually. The 2022 Festival included a discussion panel on the queer experience and anti-Blackness within the Afro Latin dance culture, which helped inform topics for OLGBTQA's 2022 Summit on Intersectionality. On June 7, 2022

(Item No. 65), the Board approved a sponsorship for the Festival in the amount of \$5,000 on behalf of OLGBTQA.

The 2023 Festival discussion panel “This is Me” celebrated LGBTQ+ individual truth, unapologetic self-love, and self-expression. OLGBTQA staff enlisted dozens of new newsletter subscribers and interacted with hundreds of Festival attendees in between workshops and other activities, while distributing OLGBTQA-related swag and resources. On March 14, 2023 (Item No. 69), the Board approved a sponsorship for the event in the amount of \$5,000 on behalf OLGBTQA.

### **CHILD IMPACT**

The recommended action would have a positive impact on children and youth, particularly LGBTQ+ youth—as measured by the County indicator “**Every Child Healthy - Developmental Assets and Healthy Lifestyle**”—through supporting the provision of safe, welcoming, and age-relevant LGBTQ+ events. Afro Latin dance combines physical exercise and cultural appreciation.

### **SENIOR IMPACT**

The recommended action would have a positive impact on seniors, particularly LGBTQ+ older adults, through supporting the provision of safe, welcoming, and age-relevant LGBTQ+ events. LGBTQ+ older adults have a higher likelihood of experiencing social isolation, and events such as the Festival provide opportunities for social activity and connection.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The recommended action would have no/neutral sustainability implications.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION**

Without County sponsorship, OLGBTQA would not be able to contribute financial support for the 2024 Festival or the actualization of safe and celebratory LGBTQ+ spaces through this venture.

### **STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL**

The Clerk of the Board is asked to notify Sera Fernando, Saldy Suriben, Tinh Nguyen, and Van Dinh, Office of the County Executive.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- Levine Act Forms QCC